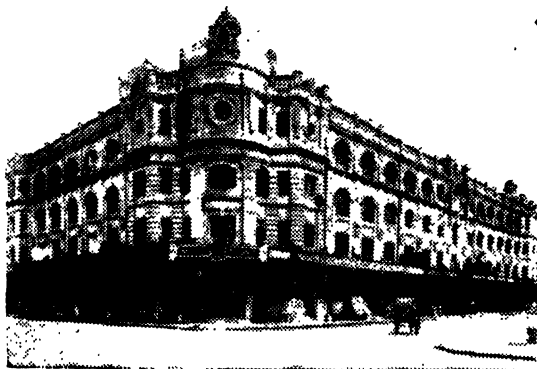


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Last Corner

- by -

Little Man

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B. G. Hornim

(Editor, *Bombay Sentinel*)

**Karnatak Publishing House,
Karnatak House,
Bombay 2.**

Karnatak Popular Books' Series No. 1.

**The Latest of "LAST CORNER"
- by - "LITTLE MAN"**

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Last Corner
- by -
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Foreword

I have been asked to write a foreword to this little book, of which I am something in the nature of a Godfather. Not that I claim to have anything to do with the making of it, nor can I claim to have chosen its name.

As far as I am concerned all I have had to do with it was to give the "Little Man" a small space of *lebensraum* in the *Bombay Sentinel*, which was already as overcrowded as a single room tenement in a Bombay slum. Space in the newspapers is very precious in these days of paper shortage and to spare even a small corner, to hand it over for permanent occupation, is no slight strain on an Editor's generosity. That the "Little Man" whose contributions make up this book, succeeded in installing himself as a permanent occupant of the "Last Corner" of the *Sentinel* is tribute enough, and to spare, to prove that he is a "Little Man" of some consequence.

If you are not a reader of the *Bombay Sentinel*, which I can "hardly believe," you will agree with me when you have read and inwardly digested the contents of the ensuing pages.

But while I have a large and warm corner in my heart for little men in general and this "Little Man" in particular, I should have been more cautious in accommodating him if I had known he was going to be a bit of a nuisance to me. He has asked me to write a Foreword and I hate forewords--much more so writing them.

Forewords a Nuisance

I think a Foreword itself is a nuisance. I have never seen a Foreword yet that was much of a help to the reading of a book and if the book is worth reading, why does it want a Foreword? So many of the books published in this country are not worth reading that I suppose they badly need a Foreword to foist them on unwary readers; and when somebody worth reading, like Jawaharlal Nehru, or Louis Fischer writes a Foreword, people will buy the book because they know they will get at least something for their money. I can't claim that this is so in my case.

I had no wish to write this Foreword and I begged to be excused. I have resorted to every device to avoid it by such excuses and delaying tactics as have generally proved successful in other cases. But this "Little Man" is extraordinarily persistent. He has a flair for making you do what he wants. When I tell him I don't feel any urge to write a Foreword and that what I write won't be worth reading, he says "It doesn't matter, you write anything, and people will read it, because it's you"—which may be very complimentary to me but is not very flattering to you who are expected to read it.

This has been going on for about a month now. Every day I have to say, "Yes, you shall have it to-morrow" and when to-morrow comes it's not there and I have to face the music again—all this because I am not a writer by instinct but by training. I seldom feel an urge to write. The only excuse I have for writing at all is that I have a devil of a conscience, which gets stirred up by public and private wrongs, injustice in courts, oppression and repression, police excesses, cruelty to animals, the drink trade, the Old Woman of Bori Bunder, the arrogance of public officials and many other things.

When I am stirred up, I write as a matter of duty, not pleasure, because I don't take any pleasure in writing at all. I try to avoid it. As for writing just to fill space, I feel that is a form of hypocrisy which should be sternly repressed. If it has to be done, there are others to do it and only too eager. I am duly grateful to them.

That "Little Man"

However, I am writing to fill space now and there is more of it to fill, so I will tell you something about this "Little Man", which is all I can think of as appropriate to the occasion.

In the first place he is not a Little Man by any stretch of imagination. Physically he is big and intellectually he is big and he has a big conscience, and a heart much bigger than the "Last Corner", which would never hold all the things that stir his sympathies and excite his indignation. All his interest is wrapped up in the Little Men, their grievances, their wrongs and their sufferings. He is very young and he believes that wrongs can be remedied by exposure and denunciation of wrong-doing and wrong-doers.

Poor fellow, you must excuse him! He is very young and doesn't know any better. I can only hope he will reach the age of nearly seventy, as I have done, without his ardour and sympathy for the wrongs of his fellow-men and women evaporating.

When "Little Man" first came to me and applied for a lease of the "Last Corner", I felt doubtful. An Editor has to be careful in handing out a lease of this kind. But he expounded his plan. I was taken with it. It appealed to me. But then I had to make sure that this "Little Man", who talked rather big, but in a very gentle insinuating voice, could make good. So we had a rehearsal—for more than a week, I think. Every day the copy for the "Last Corner" was on my table at the allotted time and I saw that he could make good—and even better.

Become an Institution

Since then he has never let the paper or the public down. He has kept up his "Last Corner" from day to day. It has become something of an institution, like "Twilight Twitters". People look for it eagerly, they talk about it and I have reason to know that it has done some good. It is a marvellous achievement to have made this little corner a daily feature, and an established attraction of a daily paper in so short a time. "Little Man" and his "Last Corner" have sprung into popularity. Long may they enjoy it!

B. G. Horniman

Bombay,
12th October 1942.

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“Little Man’s” Note.

I am feeling strangely excited as I sit down to write this note. For, on this very day, *the 10th*, three months ago I sat down to write the “Little Man’s” note to my first book. And, strange as it may seem, it was on this very day, *the 10th*, that I approached B. G. exactly *ten months* ago with the request that I may be given—to use his own inimitable phrase—“a small space of *lebensraum*” in his *Bombay Sentinel* for my “Last Corner.”

Ten months may be a considerable slice in the life of an Indian who *averagely* expects to live in this little world of ours for barely twenty-seven years. But ten months is—so I am reminded very often—too short a time to expect success to come your way. And especially so in our profession of journalism which finds few chances and fewer still outlets in this our India.

I have been told stories of many, who have wooed journalistic success for years together but somehow it has eluded them and that due to not any fault of theirs—I have been warned and that too, frighteningly, not to expect success to come my way in any appreciable time, that is to say if it should ever come! ‘Well wishing’ elders have advised me to stay away from this line where, so they pointed out, of money there was nil and of anything else only the fragment of a chance.

I remembered all this but nevertheless chose to stake my life in this line, may be, because I couldn’t help it. The lure was too strong and my youth softened for me the spectre of failure and multi-multiplied the meagre chances of success.

And so I found myself with a prayer in my heart, a pen-of-sorts in my hand and the good wishes of my few friends, ready to start. That prayer of mine has often stood me in very good stead. That pen-of-sorts of mine has not failed me very often. And when it has, the good wishes of my friends have always been there to help me along.

Perhaps the most fortunate thing that could have happened for me was that my start in serious journalism should be on B. G.'s *Sentinel*. B. G. has an uncanny knack of encouraging you when you are discouraged; of helping and guiding you when but for that help and guidance, you are likely to fall into a dangerous rut; and, of course, of 'pulling you up' when but for that 'pulling up' you might have become hackneyed.

I am not trying to say that I am neither in a rut nor even that I am not hackneyed. Good heavens, no! That is not for me to say. That is for you to decide. What I am trying to say is that I was lucky right from the start in having B. G. help me along.

And then came the day, barely six months after my start, when I was asked to compile my "Last Corner" in a book. So soon! It was too good to be true! But remembering the stories of failures told to me and the warnings of my 'well-wishing' elders, I was a little hesitant. Suppose such a book failed 'to catch.' Suppose it didn't sell at all. Not that my ideal—and, believe me, I did have and still have an ideal!—was to write books that would 'sell'. But still, a book has to sell to be read. And if it didn't sell at all that would only mean one thing—that, people weren't very keen on reading what you wrote.

So I hesitated. I asked these few friends of mine. They too, realising the heart-break that might result from a failure, gave hesitant replies. Once again, I turned to B. G. And he asked me to go straight ahead. His spirit of enterprise and adventure has grown with his years in this line, and infused by it, at least to some small extent, I 'went ahead'.

And breathlessly I waited for the result.

But when I was told the result, I couldn't quite believe it. Almost like the pauper who is told that he has drawn a fabulously large sweep-stake ticket. For so I was told, that inside fifty days my book had sold out and still there were orders coming in.

And so, here is my second book. I don't know whether it will meet with the same result. I can only pray and hope it does. The rest I leave to you all for whom, primarily, I write and but for whom we writers might wither away.

That reminds me. At the start I wanted to discuss two questions in this note.

Firstly, what is the significance of this name "Little Man" that I have selected. I have been asked this question by many friends and others. To be absolutely candid, there was no pre-meditated significance of this name. The reasons for selecting it were many and varied. True, when I first asked B. G. for the "Last Corner", I told him I would write mainly about the little men, only I didn't use this term then. There was another reason, a very personal one which I can't reveal. May be, still another reason was that I "was a disgruntled rebel" as a 'well-wisher' put it.

But the main reason was that I had just then read that beautiful book of Hans Fallada (I hope I remember the author's name right) *Little Man, what now?* I remember how when I came to the end of that story, my eyes were misty and my mind confused and stark rebellion in my heart. I keep imagining the anguish of THAT little man when he rested his burning temples and crushed spirits on the bosom of HIS little woman.

The second question that I wanted to handle is the frequent criticism against me, that in my writings "the first person singular is a bit too much to the fore." I frankly admit the charge but refuse to plead guilty to it, for, I honestly believe there is no guilt attached to it. After all I write what *I* see—what *I* hear—what *I* feel—and what *I* think. True, a columnist has more to reflect public opinion than to guide and or educate it. But how can a columnist efface himself from the picture? If he should avoid the personal touch, where would be the difference between him and a school or college text-book writer?

That is the only apologia that I can offer to these critics, though personally I feel that none is needed because what they criticise in me is not a failing at all. That is what I honestly feel. If they were to criticise me for writing too much *about* myself, that would be another thing. But they haven't done that yet and I hope there will never be need for that.

Bombay Sentinel,
10th January, 1943.

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Thursday, 1st October ' 42

"Lata," who seems to be fast becoming a topical and trenchant political rhymist, sends me this one exclusively for my "Last Corner," about what Lt. Gen. Irwin said, or rather about what he should not have said. Here she goes :

BEHOLD A SAVIOUR !

Spoke Lt. Gen. Irwin
With a sigh and a sob,
" To save India for India
Is part of our job.

" The rest of your duty
Lies in curbing your kin,
Who have rebelled and committed
The ' Independence Sin.'

" Let moderation be your motto
When you fire the rifle ;
But with firmness and fairness
The Freedom Cry stifle.

"Last Corner" — by — "Little Man"

"With Indian ingratitude
I'm feeling frustrated
With a stab in the back
I'm almost prostrated."

"India for (Govt. of) India,
Is a conviction fine ;
My full support is yours
Behind the firing line."

—LATA.

Friday, 2nd October '42

The "Little" in my name seems to have caught on. What with letters from a "Little Clerk", a "Little Housewife", a "Little Boy", now comes a letter from a "Little Artist" woefully bemoaning the hardships that our Art World is up against and the brave front it manages to put on.

Dear Little Man.

I wonder whether it'll gladden your heart to know that we little artists—or rather devotees of art—are having our annual festival from the 11th instant at Nasik, to which I would sincerely like to invite you.

The Nasik Art Treasures are organising their Second Annual Exhibition, in spite of all the hurdles which art and artists are face to face with today directly or indirectly resulting from the deplorable war conditions....

V. P. Karmarkar,—a sculptor of no mean merit, believe me—, will open the exhibition. Not many

years ago this same V. P. Karmarkar was himself just a little man of art and if anyone knows our difficulties today, it is he.

Do you know the finest thing about the Nasik Art Treasures? ANY artist, from ANYWHERE, can send in ANY number of exhibits as he likes. THERE IS NO 'PRE-CENSORSHIP' AT ALL. Nor is even a single pie charged as exhibition fee. Of course, annas eight have been asked for as coolie charges, etc., but who could grudge that?

And this Nasik Art Treasures buys select pieces for their Art Gallery, sort of preserving these art treasures, when everything else is being so ruthlessly destroyed all over this unhappy world of ours.

You know, Little Man, lack of active support to art in India helps its unfortunate devotees to form a deplorably substantial part of the "vacant-eyed, empty-stomached, millions-strong army of our unfortunate unemployed."

*Yours sincerely,
"Little Artist"*

I wish I could do something for you all, but being just a "Little Man", what could I possibly do? However, I wish you all the very best success.

Saturday, 3rd October '42

Whines Mr. A. D. Gorewalla (our Controller of Civil Supplies):...fail to see why people are still complaining.

Just typical Indian ingratitude, Mr. Gorewalla—ask Lt. Gen. Irwin, He'll tell you. Don't take the complaints seriously!

"Last Corner" - by - "Little Man"

By the way where is Adviser Knight? Already in the background!

Monday, 5th October '42

A question for the Editors' Conference :

"Little Man" that I am, I have been puzzled a lot about the exact meaning of the word "pre-censorship"! To my mind,--such as it may be--there can be no other kind of censorship.

Or, can there?

*

New York, Oct. 3.

The DINNER held in New York on Friday night, to celebrate Mr. Gandhi's birthday turned out to be also the wedding BREAK FAST of Miss. . . . Reuter. (caps, mine).

*

I am emphatically told by the usual reliable authoritative circles that there is no truth whatsoever in the bazar rumour that M. Laval has sought the very good offices of the League of Nations to approach the Government of India through its Lord and Master, the Government of Britain, asking for the loan of Reginald Maxwell's services for Vichy's Home Department, or whatever they call it there!

Wednesday, 7th October '42

Mr. Churchill, asked if the Government had any statement to make regarding M. Stalin's. . . . for a second front,

said, "We are quite clear that no statement from the British Government is called for at the present time...."

Exactly. What is called for from the British Government is a SECOND FRONT, not a SECOND STATEMENT!

*

A "serious" warning against neglect on the part of the public to take shelter on every occasion that the sirens are sounded, has been issued by the Government of Bengal....

Failure to take shelter.... is an offence

You'd, believe me, be committing a greater still offence if you enquired—ever so meekly, as you could!—about the location and whereabouts of these shellers!

*

"We deeply regret our past mistakes. We have opened out a new chapter in our relations. We BEG of our Indian brethren to treat us as CHILDREN OF MOTHER-INDIA....." (Caps, mine here and throughout), said Frank R. Anthony, the new President-in-Chief of the Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association.

.....(He) condemned the tribe of "Fire-eating Imperialists and ranting demagogues who trotted out the theory of racial purity. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A PURE RACE The Europeans are the worst 'bastardised' race of Europe and there is no more hybrid race than the English! The Directors of the East India Company encouraged and subsidised marriage between Europeans and high class Indian women.... We are citizens of Mother India and want freedom for this country." (Why not "our country"?)

Residents of Byculla, Mahim and other such territories, please note !

Because this was a special occasion, the meeting did not end with a 'mixed' version of Boomps-a-daisy !

Thursday, 8th October '42

"Lata", whom the other day I called a "topical and trenchant political rhymist", seems to have gone 'goo-goo' and sent me this lyric, which I think is more like an elegy, but then my knowledge of poetry is so limited !

WHERE, OH, WHERE

Oh, where and oh, where
Can that Kukini guy be ?

Oh, we searched high
And we searched low,
And we strained our ears
For his "aii-yo-ho-ho-ho" !

Oh, where and oh, where
Can that Kukini guy be ?

The office looked blank
And the easy chair sighed ;
His lonely colleagues sobbed
And the chief nearly cried !

Oh, where and oh, where
Can that Kukini guy be ?

The club-room was empty
And the sofa was bare ;
And the sound of his snoring
So sweet, was not there !

Oh, where and oh, where
Can that Kukini guy be ?

So desperate and dejected
We went to the beach ;
And there sat our Kukini guy
With a sweet little peach !

And now we all know
Where the Kukini guy be !

—LATA.

Saturday, 10th October ' 42

Mr. B. G. Horniman has, "take it from me", an uncanny flair for roping in the cream of journalistic talent for his *Sentinel*. The latest to be so roped in—or, rather attracted as if by a powerful magnet—is none other than A. F. S. (affectionately known as "Bobby") Talyarkhan of whom it used to be freely said that it was heaps more interesting to listen into his commentaries on the Pentangular matches rather than to watch the matches themselves.

Well, "Bobby", here's "hats off" to you on your—may I call it more than merited promotion? And here's welcome to you. Only please don't put the "Little Man" in the shadows !

Glancing through the pages of the September issue of the *Northern India Observer*, I came across this beautiful bit :

A little boy was asked to write an essay on the International Situation. He wrote : "From 1914-1918 there was a world war ; ever since then we have had two minutes peace every year.

Tuesday, 13th October ' 42

And now coming to the most depressing news of the last couple of days—the DISMISSAL of Sind's popularly elected premier, (ex-Khan Bahadur and O. B. E.) Allah Baksh.

The much boosted—by Amery, Cripps and Churchill Ltd.,—theory of popular ministries has at last exploded. A popularly elected premier has been DISMISSED. Another, Fazlul Huq, is chafing under the Governor's interference.

Should I ask, "Whither Democracy?" Or, should I just chant, "Democracy is dead. Long live Democracy!"

The Muslim League is gloating. Another "deliverance day"! It is rather humiliating to see a political party, claiming for itself the entire Muslim votage of India, stooping to such petty *tamashas*! This much gloating over yet another 'below the waist line blow' for democracy! Is this a sample of the Jinnahcracy to come? If so, Heaven help Pakistan and Pakistanies!

Wednesday, 14th October '42

Four hundred years is a very very long time in the life of Man. And especially so in India. With the average of our life so deplorably and primitively low as twenty-three years, four hundred years would have seen almost as many as twenty generations.

So that twenty generations ago, this day, was born Akbar the Great, in a little village, Umarkote, in the 'land of the Hurs.' With all his faults, his rule was Godsent for India inasmuch as it gave this unfortunate country some sort of peace from the constant internecine warfare and the inevitable war-miseries.

Akbar had two aims in view. To unite India politically and to unite her two major peoples, the Hindus and the Muslims, into a harmonious nation, creating more or less an infused race.

In his first aim he was so successful and laid such firm foundations for the Indian State that it was able to survive in spite of Jehangir spending over-much time in his Nur Jehan's arms ; in spite of Shah Jehan indulging in unlimited murder to ascend the throne, being paid back in the same coin by his infamous son, Aurangzeb.

Akbar, however, did not succeed in his second aim to any appreciable extent, as his *Dine-e-Ilahi* failed to catch the imagination of the people. But the people, the Hindus and the Muslims, learned to live and let live. There were no Hindu-Muslim riots because there was nobody interested in having them.

It was only when Aurangzeb started his religious persecution and divided the country into rival religious camps, that the white man was able to worm his way in.

When I was very very little, I read somewhere in some book that Aurangzeb was so fond of life that he actually had 'threatened' to be born again—and in India, if you please!—just to teach "these *Kaffir* sons of stone idols" their proper place in life.

I don't know whether he has been born again and if so, where and what is he. But this I do know that Mr. Mohammed Ali Jinnah is very much alive and kicking!

Thursday, 15th October '42

My doctor—he is one of those members of that noble profession who get so interested and engrossed in curing their patients as to completely forget all about their fees, and sometimes, I think, deliberately—well, this doctor of mine has prescribed a gharry-drive every evening, "if you can afford it", to help me recoup my strength ravaged by 'flu.

The musical clop-clop, of the horse and the slow rhythmic motion with the breezes softly wafting! But being by nature inquisitive, I start innocently asking the gharriwallas about their lives. And because they are, as a rule, so frank and sincere, (with of course, very dishonourable exceptions!), they tell me their stories.

Stories of their poverties; of their persecutions at the hands of—well, never mind whom; of their wants and diseases; of their lack of joys and surfeit of sorrows; of their "blood, tears and toil."

And as one of them was telling me of his childhood in a far, far away village, where there was a little stream to splash about in, with a tender mist in

his bleary eyes, pan in his mouth and an unlit bidi dangling from his emaciated lips,—with a sudden jerk the story was cut short and he pulled up his horse, making it perform a dangerous step of *Kathakali* on its hind legs, and venomously he spat : " These thrice-cursed sons of misguided monkeys ! "

Because just then a double-decker monster of a bus had come careering along, overtaken the gharry and IMMEDIATELY swung SHARP LEFT to halt at its stop. leaving no option for the gharry other than either to pull up in less than a couple of yards, or to climb on to the footpath or to dash straight into this double-decked monster.

Having seen this dangerous display of unscrupulous road-hogging. I wondered that there weren't many more bus accidents than there are reported to be. May be because people have decided to submit to this bullying, in the best interests of themselves.

Saturday, 17th October '42

I have been handed a very very sad letter which I am sure would never have been written if the writer had not been reduced to pitiable straits. Much as I wish I could do something for him, how much can a struggling " Little Man " of journalism do to immediately bring urgently needed aid to such people.

Our city is known as Bombay the bountiful. There are many whose hearts are tender and still more who have something they could easily spare. For them I print this letter :

Respected Sir,

.... I would have waited on you personally with this letter but owing to my ill-health I could not do so.

I am a young man. I am a stenographer. I was getting on very well. Seven months back a big calamity overtook me. I lost my wife and child. This gave me a big shock. Somehow I gathered courage and went on with my job.

It so happened that three months ago there was a terrible mental disturbance which paralysed my whole system. I lost my mental balance. I was asked to take rest for six months. I could not do my office work efficiently. So I had to resign.

I had little savings. I have got a daughter. I maintained myself these three months. I would have pulled on another two to three months but owing to the heavy rise in prices of foodstuffs, I had to spend everything. Now I have been short of funds.

.... I understand that you sympathise with the poor and needy. I request that you will kindly extend to me your usual sympathy and oblige me with some help, as I have run very short of foodstuffs.

When I am better I shall call on you personally.

I do not think it fair to reveal this poor fellow's name publicly. To those of you who can spare and send me something for him, I will send you his name and address.

PLEASE do send something and send it urgently. This is the first favour of this kind that I am asking from you all. Apart from this being a personal favour to me, you'll be doing a mighty fine thing, for which if there be

no other visible reward, the fine feeling in the mouth will itself compensate you.

PLEASE HURRY UP. Thanks a million.

Monday, 19th October '42

On Saturday I printed a letter, given to me, from a young man whom calamity had visited in abundance. Death of wife and one child, continuous sickness, loss of job and what not. On his behalf and on behalf of his little daughter, I appealed to you all, because he "had run short of foodstuffs."

On Sunday I received a handsome cheque from one whom I do not know personally, alongwith this short and sweet letter :

"Little Man",

I am enclosing a cheque for Rs. 30 only, in response to your appeal in yesterday's issue.

Yours truly,

P. S. My name should not be published in any case.

Thank you very much, brother. Your money will ease that poor young man no end. I have received three other contributions of Rs. 10 each.

But I am expecting a few more donations. This young father and daughter have to be seen through for two or three months, till such time as he is back on his feet.

This is the first favour of this kind that I have asked for from Bombay's generous public. I am sure the young father, his little daughter and I will not be let down. PLEASE hurry up.

*

A telephone call : .

Is that you, Little Man ? "

" Yes."

" This is ' Tiny Timkie ', Little Man. Well, here is the first of the grievances you asked me to ring you up about.

" Last evening about 7 o'clock, I got into a " G " route bus at Dhobi Talao. Conductor so cheeky and insolent. Standing right in the gang-way. Had to shout at him to make him stand aside. As a reprisal he looked at me so insultingly. Sort of making me feel ever so ' tiny ' !

" Somewhere near Thakurdwar a middle-aged lady wanted to get in. She put one foot on the foot-board and promptly this conductor gave the double-bell and the bus started. The poor old thing had to cling on for life.

" Two young boys in the bus wanted to get down at a particular stop. But while they were about to get out the bus started. So they had to get down at the next stop and walk back.

" By the way, Little Man, the bus conductor's number was 1559."

Tuesday, 20th October '42

Up to last evening, I had received, for the poor ill-starred young stenographer and his little daughter, eighty-five rupees. I felt mighty fine, folks. It is things like these that help me gain and retain faith in Humanity, in Man, and, of course, in the little men and their little women.

An envelope bearing over many stamps, marked, "EXPRESS DELIVERY", contained two five rupee notes, with just this much written on a wee bit of paper :

*"Ref. Sentinel Last Corner of 17th Oct. 1942—
From "A Little Muslim".*

No name, no address !

Another envelope contained a ten-rupee note with a small note :

*"To Little Man. In response to your appeal,
herewith what little I can spare—"Poor Man."*

Once again, no name, no address ! These are what I should like to call "the unknown soldiers of Humanity."

A young doctor sends five and writes :

*Dear Mr. "Little Man", I do not need the name
of the gentleman. Neither do I want my name to be
advertised. Yours faithfully,*

"B" sends five, because "B", I happen to know who he is, would never be left out from a cause like this.

Miss Dina R. Patel read my "Last Corner" in a moving train and sent me a cheque.

A 'Little Man', an old friend, sent ten and does not want his name to be mentioned.

Another gentleman sends me ten and also does not want his name. . . .

Thursday, 22nd October '42

I have received several donations for the young stenographer and his little daughter. More than enough has already reached me. So please don't send any more contributions. The money will be well utilised and this young stenographer is also in the way of getting a job as a result of the publicising of his case in the "Last Corner."

"Little Man".

Friday, 23rd October '42

And so at last the 'day of days' has dawned! The United India publications, my publishers, have had their 'blessed event' and their 'first born',—"Last Corner" by "Little Man" with a foreword by B. G. Horniman—is out for public view and also for purchase, if you should so desire!

But my publishers seem to be of the prolific kind, because their very first 'blessed event' has brought forth twins! There is this howling "Little Man" brat and another, equally howling, "We 'Cover' Life" with a foreword by D. F. Karaka.

B. G. was given an advance copy of "We 'Cover' Life." Smiling in his own inimitable way, he turned over the pages and read the first line of D. F.'s foreword: "My mind goes back ten years..." And a mischievous twinkle crept into B. G.'s eyes and he "twittered": "That means going back to the nursery!"

Another funny incident: A worthy professor from the 'land of the Hurs' saw "We 'Cover' Life" and wanted

to know if the three authors were some kind of a super streamlined insurance agents and "We 'Cover' Life" was some kind of a comprehensive 'life policy'!

To-day I am so happy. "There is a rainbow (in fact, so many rainbows!) round my shoulder." I am happy because B. G. has given me a rare foreword in which after calling me a bit of a nuisance and what not, he says some awfully sweet things about my writings—now that, I don't know if you know it, is a rare compliment from B. G.

B. G. feels he is a sort of a Godfather to "Little Man". May I extend the simile and look upon the *Sentinel* as a sort of God-mother—to both these I am grateful for his faith in me and for her *lebensraum* which she gave me. I hope I have let down neither.

Saturday, 24th October '42

A telephone call :

"Is that you, 'Little Man'?"

"Yes. Who are you and what can I do for you?"

"This is 'Tiny Timkie', Little Man. Ringing you up about another of our grievances you wanted to know of.

"There are ever so many loud-speakers installed in this already over-noisy city of ours, I don't know why! I am told these are 'hitched on' by the War Publicity Committee, though I don't know. When I tried to listen in, all I could gather was that someone was talking as if his inside was being torn open. These speakers vomit out so loudly, harshly and raucously that no one can make out what is being said.

“ The only thing that can be made out is the switch over from the lectures to the records. And I have yet to see anyone listening in to the talks. I have seen a few people hanging around while the music is on, but the moment the talks begin, everybody fades away. However, that’s none of my business.

“ Nobody would mind this sort of trumpeting, ‘ Little Man ’, but it begins “ you’ll hardly believe ” as early as 7-30 a.m. Advanced Standard Time, if you please ! Nobody wants his morning sleep ruined, nor do the early risers want to start their day with a splitting headache and that for no fault of theirs !

“ And what about the people abed with sickness ? I know the case of a certain little woman who had a blessed event at about 4-30 a. m. At six, tired and exhausted, she fell asleep and the doctor heaved a sigh of relief. But in a short while the loud-speaker started its bleating and she woke up, much betimes, with a shock. The language that the hitherto gentle doctor used—well, I can’t possibly repeat it.

“ By the way, ‘ Little Man ’, the ‘ culprit speaker ’ was the one, somewhere in Parekh Street, Girgaum.”

*

Sir Gulam Hussein Hidaytulla has joined the Muslim League without telling all his colleagues ! There is a beautiful and common Hindi phrase to describe this :

“ Are bhai, Vho to apni zat pe aa gaya ! ”

I have tried to translate it, but the English language is so wanting !

Monday, 26th October '42

By far the most pregnant news in this morning's *Chronicle* was that the United States Senate while agreeing to Roosevelt's demand that he be allowed to conscript boys of 18 and 19 for combat service, laid down that these boys should not be sent overseas without adequate training.

As one Senator pointed out, he was opposed to the calling up of "children to fight our battles." "If they are liquidated", said he, "no generation will remain in this country to build it up after peace."

That's what I call thinking in terms of to-morrow and not merely to-day. Thinking in terms of a better world order after this fanatical and foolish war and not merely in terms of winning the war for the sake of winning it. In fact, the noblest war aim of all.

*

A Muslim-Leaguer tells me in confidence that Jinnah is not likely to admit Ghulam Hussein into the League's fold. Because if such sharp turn-about gets into the League, poor old Jinnah won't know where he stands. He might then have to launch a campaign for Jinnahstan within Pakistan itself, if you know what I mean!

*

Too many bombs are bursting around us these days—in tram cars, in cinemas and what not.

Thank Heavens these are non-violent bombs and therefore not hurting nobody!

Tuesday, 27th October '42

Sometime back I happened to bump into someone, who for certain good reasons wishes to remain nameless, who told me of the strange goings-on inside the Sophia Wadia College for Women, at Warden Road, in our own city. I promised to inquire into it and discovered that the actual state of affairs was even worse than portrayed by this friend.

And then I read a very long letter by Mr. K. T. Shah, in this morning's *Chronicle* on the same topic. So that there are already some people awake to this new menace in our city, a menace which IF NOT STAMPED OUT HERE AND NOW, is likely to spread, breaking up heaven alone knows how many homes.

Now this Sophia College is a Sacred Heart institution though their activities are far from those that His Sacred Heart could ever condone. It is a college exclusively meant for women and therefore likely to appeal to some of our older and more reactionary parents who, curiously enough, believe that a girl's going to an ordinary college with boys is tantamount to saying goodbye to her morals, her character and what not.

Such, and, of course, some other parents, too, began patronising this college which has "half-a-professor" or even less per subject, as was pointed out vehemently by many a responsible speaker, at the University Meeting which considered an extension of its affiliation.

I remember a padre pleading for sympathy for this college, for a chance! And now let us see how this sympathy has been sabotaged ungratefully and this chance grossly abused.

A young Parsi girl from a very good family was con-

verted. She was, I gather, lured into this by soft spoken and seductive 'messages' of Christ. The mundane part was favouritism, she being made a prefect and flattered in many other ways and whisked away to Panchagani, to be cloistered behind the walls of the Sacred Heart !

A Muslim girl, from a very well-to-do family, whose parents are reported to be in South Africa, is heading for the 'guillotine'—maybe she has already been slaughtered !

Mr. K. T. Shah believes that a Sikh girl too, is heading the same way and "four or five others on the waiting list"! But what boils my blood, is that these people carry on these activities in the name of Jesus Christ, Who because of His illimitable love for everyone, would never have even thought of such things. Must He still be constantly crucified by His so-called and self-styled followers ?

Wednesday, 28th October '42

Lucknow monkeys are reported to have become veritable pests. These monkeys include among their 'illegal' activities, interfering "with electric fuses thereby plunging buildings in darkness...."

Electricity is an "essential service." How is it then that Maurice Hatchet—pardon me, I mean Hallet, I am always making this silly mistake!—hasn't yet invoked the Defence of India Rules against these 'saboteurs'? Or, has he a soft corner for monkeys?

*

Percentage of representation of communities in the Indian Army, so it is reported, is "Muslim : 32 p.c., Sikh 8.5 p.c..... Others : 3.4 p.c."

What I would like to know, however, is not the percentage of representation but of the pay-roll, especially of this "Others" class, if you know what I mean !

*

The "Jam" joined the army
To do and die ;
He didn't do
And he didn't die !

—LATA.

The rest of the poem will follow in due course.

*

Bapu Narayan Athavale, to be read with "Rao Bahadur" as a prefix, our Coroner, advised the jury at an inquest, not to believe a certain witness. Referring to the police firing, he told the jury, "If there was nothing, why did the police open fire at all ? The police were not making a show."

But the jurors said, in, of course, different language, "go eat coke" ! And that to Bapu Narayan Athavale at this time of his age !

I am told he is looking forward to the day when he will hold inquests on all these jurors—he is already rubbing his clammy palms in anticipated glee. What !

Thursday, 29th October '42

An innocent looking advertisement appears in any one of our established dailies about "Wanted immediately male steno-typists. Salary 45|50. Apply Box No. . . ."

And hundreds of our unemployed ones read it and full of renewed hope, rush to answer it. Soon comes a letter to one of them, "Will you call at this office, in person...."

And full of still more hope, he trots along to the office and is promised a job but on completion of three days' trial period—FOR WHICH PERIOD HE IS NOT TOLD WHETHER HE WILL BE GIVEN ANY SALARY AND INVARIABLY IS NOT GIVEN ANY!

During these three days he is made to rush through piles of accumulated work, putting in overtime too! And on the third day he is told that his trial is over and that after 'TRYING' a few more applicants, they would let him know if he was selected. And that the salary, in any case, would be only 25|30, as in these hard days it was not possible to pay more.

If he should be foolish enough to point out that the advertised salary was 45|50, he would be told to mind his own damn business and "you are ruled out and get to hell out of here"! The advertised salary seems to be only a snare for some applicants at least to be lured in!

I know of one company at least, with a pretentious name including a bracketed "India", which 'TRIED' about a dozen people for such a job and in the end gave the job to a fictitious person. Their over-accumulated work got through, where was the need for any but a fictitious person?

So that a two-rupee ad saved them a steno-typist's salary for a month at least. What an ingenuous 'racket'!

Asks me one of these 'lambs', "...is there no way out?" Sure there is. Organise, for the love of Mike, organise. Only a well-knit association of you all can bring these

shameless rascals to book. You'll even be able to get these people, one by one, 'blacklisted' by the newspapers so that their ads won't find any light of the day, anywhere. Organise !

*

A 100 p.c. genuine prize-howler, overheard exclusively for the "Last Corner": 'Opus Mirandi' is a 'tongue of the slip for 'Modus Operandi'!

Friday, 30th October '42

By "jumping into the 'Sophia Squabble';" I seem to have raised a veritable hornet's nest. A couple of people have written to say, mine was the right thing to do. And others have written asking me to pipe down. Since the latter are in a majority, numerically as well as from vehemence point of view, I give them precedence. For your information this "Sophia Squabble" referred to the conversion activities indulged in by the Ladies of the Sacred Heart in the Sophia College for Women at Warden Road in our own city.

Dear Little Man,

Will you publish the following and answer same in your column. You have done harm (to whom!), now be fair and publish this and exhibit your brave spirit.

Your sin.,

B. Charles.

*Pinkie Mansion,
Byculla.*

I take it that this name and address are genuine. Anyway, here is the letter Mr. B. Charles wants me to publish :

You are a sort of a guy who is fond of tracing subjects you do not know just for the fun of showing off. A novice journalist, perhaps, or a disgruntled street sop!

I challenge you to prove the allegations you have made against the Sophia College for women and which is the padre who begged for a chance.

If it were the Muslims you were running (down) in such ignorant way you would have got the knife in your belly by now.

Now, Mr. Charles, about what "sort of a guy" I may be is a matter of opinion. You are welcome to yours and let me have mine! About your challenging me to prove the allegations,—why don't you go along to the cloistered Sophia College and ask the Ladies of the Sacred Heart there? If they can convince me I am wrong, I'll eat my words and that, too, in your presence, if you like!

The name of the Padre who begged for a chance—go and look up the files of the University Senate proceedings and you will find out.

I do not know of any Muslims indulging in such questionable activities at the present time but if you know better why not give me authentic facts and I'll write about them too. As for the knife in the belly, may be you presume that I was sure you all wouldn't do nothing to me just because of your huge big omni-forgiving Christian hearts!

There are plenty of people, bigger and better than me, interesting themselves into this "Sophia Squabble" and

you'll soon be hearing things. Just you wait, Mr. Charles. There's plenty coming !

Saturday, 31st October '42

All the Tommies in the city, ATTENTION, please ! Here is my present for you, to liven up this evening, and perhaps many more to come, for you. Sing this song to the tune of "We join the Navy" and see how it tickles. If, however, you don't like it, please say so candidly. I won't be hurt ! Come on then, open your lusty throats and here we go (others, so inclined, may also join in) :

THE ARMY'S 'JAM' !

The 'Jam' joined the army
To do and die ;
He didn't do
And he didn't die !

The 'Jam' joined the army
To wear the 'form ;
But the tailor howled
And raised a storm !

The 'Jam' joined the army
To ride a horse ;
But the animal shied
And Oh, what a toss !

The 'Jam' joined the army
To parade his stripes ;
But lunch-hour blitzkrieg
Gave him such gripes !

The 'Jam' joined the army
To shoot the Hun ;
But he didn't kill him
His was only a pop-gun !

The 'Jam' joined the army
Not for kind or cash ;
But "V" for victory
Three stops and a dash !

—LATA.

*

Another "Last Corner's" exclusive 100 p. c. genuine
prize-howler :

*While summing up for the jury at the inquest into
the police firing at Parel, was Rao Bahadur Bapu
Narayan Athavale on the verge of a miscarriage ?*

*

A huge half-page ad in this morning's *Chronicle* loudly
proclaims :

AMERICA FIGHTS FOR FREEDOM

Yes, yes we know but why rub it in !

Monday, 2nd November '42

"Hamara Hindustan" Publications have sent me a
nice little booklet, "Youths Unite" ! by Jawaharlal Nehru.

And as I read through its pages, I seemed to hear once
again that beloved agitated voice, talking, persuading, plead-

ing, warning—in fact, what you might call, crusading,—the voice that I haven't heard for such a long long time !

*

And then I read Jinnah's reply to 'propounders of new schemes', in which he says, "...provisional Government can be formed during the warprovided Muslim India has an EQUAL footing...." (caps, mine).

What does that word "equal" mean? Does Jinnah want parity with the Congress? Or, parity with the rest? In other words, fifty per cent of the seats for Jinnah's Muslim India—not for Muslims, as such—and fifty per cent. for the rest, including the Mahasabha, the Sikhs, Ambedkar's depressed classes, the Labour, the Parsis, the Indian Christians, the Anglo-Indians, the vested commercial interests and then the non-Muslim-League Muslims and the Congress, and of course, finally all the non-descripts like me !

That is not parity, Mr. Jinnah ! That is piracy, if you know what I mean ! And the days of piracy will shortly be no more—that's why this war is being fought. Or may be, along with Churchill, Amery and Cripps Co. Un-Ltd., you don't know this !

*

A journalist friend, whose wife was about to bring off a blessed event in a local maternity hospital, received this urgent note from a nurse-friend from the hospital :

"Your wife has just delivered two baby girls. Nothing more to add."

*

Asked to explain the secret of his impish gift, said the perpetrator of "Last Corner's" prizeshewlers: "It's just that my English is so unwell!"

Tuesday, 3rd November '42

As I sit down to write today's "Corner", in front of me lies a little bit of paper—a little bit torn from a lovely almond-shade, woven-texture letter paper, on which is printed in a lovely shade of green:

SOPHIA COLLEGE FOR WOMEN
CONVENT OF THE SACRED HEART
WARDEN ROAD BOMBAY

And on it are written in a girlish hand, just two names—names of two girls, a Parsee and a Muslim. That's all! Not one word more! Who wrote this to me and why? Was it some timorous one from inside this 'college'? Has the citadel itself been pierced?

And then Mrs. Bapsey Sabavala, the indefatigable, writes a letter which I reproduce IN FULL, as otherwise she is likely to think things and, may be, not being content with that, she might even say things! Here she goes:

Little Man,

Swords have been crossed before when you will remember you got knocked off the track. One hopes, you have since recovered. You say you are a writer, and if a writer be also a thinker, then one wonders how you could have jumped into the "Sophia Squabble". Surely God is one's own private property (!) and the thoroughfares, main and small, upon which one travels

in order to reach Him are also entirely one's own private concern? How matters it then, if a certain completely adolescent individual in Sophia College chooses suddenly to change her road and take to another and newer one, provided she reaches her Ultimate Goal? Is it not far better to be "In Tune With The Infinite" in one's own way than be altogether out of tune in some other way one cannot find?

BAPSEY SABAVALA.

Exactly, Mrs. Bapsey Sabavala! But IS IT NOT BETTER STILL to be in tune with ANY Infinite—and for that matter to "be altogether out of tune"—than with One Which has been rammed down your throat by methods.

Do you want me to go further? Just you say the word! Facts? There will be plenty coming! All in good time!

Elsewhere it is said that I am indulging in cheap cracks at Christ and Christianity. Because I asked, "Must He still be constantly crucified by His so-called and self-styled followers?" And you call that a "cheap crack"!

Wednesday, 4th November '42

A few days ago I wrote about the exploitation of poor clerks at the hands of some firms. And now comes a bitter letter about it : ,

Dear Little Man,

This exploitation of the unemployed seems to have been picked up by the Bombay firms from some of the firms in the moffusil. (I wonder!)

There is one company at Belgaum. This company does not advertise in the columns of either the local or up-country papers, but there is a sort of mouth-canvassing business that does the trick. Usually some one applies and gets the job. He is placed on trial not for three or four days but for full eight days. His working hours are from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The poor fellow works hard putting in some overtime to execute the extra over-accumulated work heaped upon him; and in the end he does not get anything but a curt letter announcing his doom. So the poor man has to trudge the endless way of unemployment.

This I know as one of my friends was similarly treated by that firm. And for the hard work of eight days, working almost 12 hours per day including Saturdays and holidays, he got only Rs. 4/- and that too in his case the firm was extra generous. This company appoints a clerk every eight days and gets rid of him at the end of that time, without paying his due, and thereby all the accumulated work being properly executed at others expense.

This I write because this damn dirty exploitation is going on at the present moment and nobody seems to take up the issue.

*Yours sincerely,
"Small Man."*

My dear "Small Man," nobody will take up the issue except the ones who feel the pinch. The only way out is to organise, Organise, ORGANISE !

*

Talking of "Hindustan Hamara", the youthful Publishers of that name seem to be over prolific. Their latest is a lovely map of India with "two eyes" through which you see the two Gandhis—Abdul Gaffar Khan and Mohandas Karamchand. What would I not give to see Jinnah, Jawaharlal and Azad in the same photograph !

Thursday, 5th November '42

Shanti aur anand—Peace and happiness—what beautiful words—what vistas of hope these create—what dreams these conjure up !

And these were the words I heard repeated so often that it was obvious Devaki Bose was pining for peace and happiness in this little world of ours !

That was my impression from his picture in which he makes Leela Desai, the "Nartaki", dance and sing to spread peace and happiness—against a background of frustrated love—love which ultimately sublimates itself into sacrifice, freeing man for his mission while the woman goes away weeping !

With Pankaj singing his lovely lyrics of love, of sorrow, of life.

And then there was that song which keeps haunting me :

"Moorakh, ankhi moond kar ja !"

Friday, 6th November '42

A telephone call :

"Is that you, Little Man?"

"Yes. What can I do for you?"

"This is 'Tiny Timkie,' Little Man, bringing to you yet another grievance.

"A girl-friend of mine has just come into a little bit of money. To be exact, some three and a half p.c. Government Promissory Notes. As you might be knowing, the interest on these is given every six months.

"Well, a couple of days back, my friend was informed by the bank where she has kept these Notes, that the interest on these had been collected. She found that nearly one-fourth of this interest had been deducted by Government as Income-Tax including surcharge, if you please!

"And this friend of mine has no other income and even this interest is heaps below the minimum taxable limit.

"Well, my friend went along to the Bank to inquire what was to be done. She was directed to go to the Income-Tax Offices, fill in a refund form and may be she might receive a refund IN A FEW MONTHS. Just Imagine!

"My friend asked at the Bank if the Government inquired into each case before deducting these taxes. She was told that the procedure was **FIRST TO DEDUCT THE TAX AND THEN TO GRANT A REFUND IF NECESSARY.**

"Isn't that rather stupid," said my friend. And the Bankman merely shrugged his shoulders and said, 'yes, but it is the Government'.

"Now, this friend of mine will never be able to make head or tail of any of the cumbersome Income-Tax Forms. So it looks as if she will have to go either to some Solicitor or to some Income-Tax adviser. And this might easily cost her almost twice as much as the refund.

"As if all this is not bad enough, she is told that she will have to go through this every time !

"Is there no other way out, Little Man ?"

"I don't know, 'Tiny Timkie', I have never had enough money for these 'sharks' to pounce on me."

Saturday, 7th November '42

I am writing to-day's "Corner" while in bed with fever. I have been told to 'stay put' for some days, I don't know how many. Even my little "Corner" has been forbidden to me. But I begged for today's "Corner" because I wanted to send you my greetings for *Divali* and the New Year.

Divali—the day on which 'light' triumphed over might and the New Year on which started a New Era of *Shanti aur Anand*. I send these greetings not only to Hindus but to everybody because 'light' cannot confine itself to any one community but spreads through the world welcoming whosoever wishes it.

Maybe, this year there will be no light but just an all-enveloping pall of darkness. Maybe, this year there will be no crackers to give expression to your joy.

But I know a day will come when 'light' will have returned to earth and when this self-destroying conflict will be no more. Because it is in the very nature of things that

these human vultures, wherever they may be, will continue to fight to the bitter end until not one of them is left. Neither the Fascist brigands nor their counterparts--the "guilty men!"

Then the little men and their little women too, will get together and refashion this little world of ours "nearer to our hearts' desire." There will be light--there will be peace--there will be happiness--there will be justice.

And then the words of the Great Healer will have come true because the meek will have inherited the earth.

Friday, 13th November '42

A telephone call :

"Is that you, Little Man?"

"Yes. Who are you and what can I do for you?"

"This is 'Tiny Timkie,' Little Man, bringing to you yet another grievance."

"A couple of evenings back, I was waiting for a tram at the Petit Library stand. It was about 8-30 p.m. and pretty dark.

"Well, we were waiting on the footpath till we saw a tram coming and then we moved across the road. The road-hog motorists didn't seem to think that we should cross the road even if it were to catch a tram car!

"Well, to cut the story short, a tram came along but as I put one foot on the footboard, it started off without any bell or without any warning. The conductor was not looking at the entrance at all. I suppose he must have

been busy fighting some rear-guard action on the No-change Front !

"I had pulled myself back just in time but only to find that I had just escaped being run over by a road-hog.

"Came another tram and I sallied forth again. It stopped hardly a second and then before any passengers could either get in or out, it started again.

"Now it is like this, Little Man. I am told each tram has to halt sufficiently long for passengers to get in and out. But I suppose the conductors are not able to see the poor passengers due to the black-out.

"I am also told that there is a police regulation compelling all motor-cars, etc., to halt behind a stationary tram in order to enable the passengers to get in and out in safety.

"But this is the very first I hear of such a rule. I have never seen it obeyed nor enforced. Have you ?"

"Yes, Tiny Timkie, there IS such a rule. Only people are not being made to obey it because... well, because..... Frankly, I don't know !"

And I doubt if the police know it either !

Tuesday, 17th November '42

We people of Bombay are apt, now and then, to feel that we are bearing the entire burden of the present day miseries. We feel that it is only us who have to queue up for kerosene, for sugar and what not.

Yet people out of Bombay are up against a damn sight more than us, only they are unable to be so verbose about it.

Take Poona for instance. There is no change to be had—neither for love, nor for money! At the Post Offices you can't buy any stamps because there is no change! At the book-stalls you can't buy any books because there is no change! At the barbers you can't have a hair-cut because there is no change! You have to 'leg it out' because the tongawallas have no change!

In fact, you can get nothing because there is no blasted change—not even in the banks! And when you go to the Imperial Bank for change, you are given instead, so I am told, Section X.Y.Z. of the Currency Act!

And when you want to know the reason for this sorry muddle you are told the old old story about the Marwari melting the metal, whatever that might mean. But might I ask what in the name of heaven happens to the enormous change collected everyday at the Government Sugar shops?

And in any case, what is being done to prevent the Marwaris from melting the metal, if at all they are doing it? They say soon we'll be having the eight-anna notes. I am just itching to see them. Aren't you?

On the Poona roads, plenty of
ing straw hats reminiscent of the

Remarked a Poona Wit: "It'
tail, but keeping the head, if you

Friday, 20th Novem

To-day I am going to do someth:
going to take some statistical figures to

sions, which, however, are not one bit silly, but only very very sad and depressing.

Before this beastly war began it used to be said—and said in very reliable quarters—that in this India of ours, after nearly two whole centuries of British rule and its attendant peace and prosperity, one Indian died every two minutes from Malaria.

And it was further said that almost all these deaths could have been prevented by a fuller and freer distribution and use of Quinine.

However, Quinine somehow did not reach this one Indian who therefore died every two minutes. And the price of Quinine at that time was Rs. 22|- a pound.

To-day the price of Quinine has gone up to Rs. 250|- a pound—that is to say roughly an increase of 1,200 per cent. The obvious statistical conclusion then is that instead of one Indian dying of Malaria every two minutes, we must now be having twelve Indians dying every two minutes!

Working up these figures, we have THREE HUNDRED AND SIXTY Indians succumbing to Malaria EVERY HOUR and EIGHT THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED AND FORTY Indians EVERY DAY, or TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY NINE THOUSAND AND TWO HUNDRED Indians EVERY MONTH!

Which would mean that for the THREE YEARS of war, we must have had roughly NINE AND A HALF MILLION preventible deaths in this India of ours from Malaria alone. But making allowances for the graduated rise in the price of Quinine since the start of this beastly war, we may fix this 'casualty' figure at about FIVE MILLIONS!

(I say, "DoPI", I hope these figures of mine "are in accordance with facts!" Or, may be it is not your province to deal with these dismal details!)

Where, oh where is Quinine?

[Incidentally we have to add the figure of the number of people who have been finished off by taking quinine. Can you figure that, out, Little Man?--Editor.]

Saturday, 21st November '42

I have received a letter from a "Little Boy" which I reproduce just as it is so that those of you who may care to, may realise what our little boys—and for that matter our little girls, too, I suppose—are beginning to feel. I make no other comment because I feel none is necessary.

Dear Little Man,

Three days ago I was waiting at Marine Lines station for a B route bus. The giant monster came and stopped. We entered it. I and one Englishman sat on the same seat. I had only 6 pice and one-rupee note in my pocket and I had to pay two annas for the fare. The conductor came and I gave him the rupee note He said, "Khula Lau, choota nai hai."

So I said "I have got only 6 pice in change and I have to pay two annas for the fare, how can I give it to you when I have got only 6 pice in my pocket." Then he asked the Englishman who was sitting beside me for the fare. He gave a one rupee coin. The con-

ductor saw it, saw the Englishman and down it went into his bag.

Little Man, are you reading or are you unconscious of the shock! He didn't say even a word to that white man. He refused me perhaps because I was an Indian and still more, a Little Boy. So I didn't pay him and went free of charge.

Next thing, Little Man, these bus conductors are lacking in manners. If I were the boss of the B.E.S.T., unfortunately I am not, I would open a school of good manners, especially for Bus Conductors.

"Little Boy"

At the start I wanted to make no comment but on second thought, I find I cannot contain myself. However, I have to say just this much. And that is, my dear "Little Boy", don't you think a few special privileges are due to the White Man for the burden he has been bearing on his broad shoulders ever since the beginning of time itself!

Monday, 23rd November '42

There have been quite a few eventful bits of news over the week-end. To start with, Saturday's *Sentinel* told us about "Amery's son joins Hitler." On reading that heading, my very first reaction was to remember that "the sins of the father shall be visited upon the children"!

But as I read the message, I realised that mine was an erroneous reaction because "...everyone in London knows that John (the son) is a weakling and an immense sorrow to his father for whom there is special sympathy

Possibly for having begotten this child in a weak moment. Amery, however, is not over-depressed. Of course, if his son had joined Mahatma Gandhi that would have been another matter, for then father Amery would have surely 'lost face' !

*

Another interesting bit of news :

"Sir Stafford Cripps has left the War Cabinet. Sir Stafford Cripps becomes Minister of Aircraft Production."

Sir Stafford has also been relieved of the leadership of the House of Commons.

And I was beginning to wonder when Churchill, Amery and the Die-Hards were going to recognise Cripps' valuable services on the Indian Front !

*

Every now and then the excitable "Dim" of *Bombay Chronicle* gets extra excited over something or the other and then he is not one bit dim. No Sir, not even one bit dim. This time it is some Bob Stimson's report of the last A. I. C. C. proceedings, appearing in the *Sunday Despatch* of London, which reads :

"At one stage the proceedings were stopped while a **TROUPE OF DANCING GIRLS** were brought in to **SING AND DANCE TO THE CONGRESSMEN** This, apart from when the main resolution was put, was the only time when the majority of members showed signs of life." (Caps mine.)

And "Dim" is wild with Stimson over it. Poor "Dim" forgets that people have to make a living somehow.

And downright lying about the Congress in particular and India in general, has proved for many a very paying proposition. So why not "make hay while the sun shines" or should it rather be '..... while the sun rises!'

Tuesday, 24th November '42

While sorting out the letters that had arrived during my holiday, I came upon this one suggesting, what appears to me to be, a very practicable remedy for solving the "No-Change" chaos. The scheme suggested has just one hitch. But read the scheme itself first :

My dear Little Man,

...No change in restaurants, no change in shops (no exception to Government Grain shops), no change in Post Office, ...there is no change even in tram, bus, train or anywhere. And I am daily watching your column in the "Sentinel" to know your suggestion of remedy.

As you know, Little Man, there is an acute shortage of change in the country at present and it is certain that our Government ought to have come to know that from reports published in the papers.

The B. E. S. T. have announced that they will be issuing coupons for bus passengers....Yesterday in a restaurant at Dhobi Talao a customer bought one match box and paid one anna, and to my surprise, I witnessed that he was not given the match box as the Irani could not pay back the two pice; he, however, put forth a valuable suggestion to the customer to buy two for one anna.

What is all this ! Are OUR Government lazy or crazy ? If they run short of copper or nickel, let them mint some coins in teak wood or ply wood. I suggest teak wood for anna pieces and ply wood for pice, and there is paper for rupees. They will do for INDIA and they will be legal tender if despatched ' ex D.I.R.

*Yours sincerely,
" A SMALL MAN "*

I am sure, "SMALL MAN", that the Government would gladly accept your suggestion but for the possibility—or, probability, whichever is grammatically correct !—that the wood in the coins might be an inconvenient index of its own 'wooden'-headedness !

A businessmen usually gets himself made into a Managing Director when he finds that he is no longer either able to manage the directors or direct the managers !

Thursday, 26th November ' 42

Neither Justice Kania, nor the High Court Bar are the authors of this story :

That the letters " P. D. " in " P. D. Shamdasani " stand for " Pipe Down Shamdasani ! "

*

I have received, from someone, a very little booklet, "Useful hints for soldiers arriving in India", as a handy

little guide for American men. It contains many interesting bits but more of that later.

In the meantime, I find from it that the Y. W. C. A. is placed "Out of Bounds" for these Americans.

Poor things !

*

And then the perpetrator of "Last Corner's" exclusive prizehowlers dropped in and explained his long absence. It seems he hadn't been quite sure of the state of his mind of late. So he had been consulting some specialists about it.

And, one and all, they told him that his mind was not artistically bent, as he had been fondly imagining, but only bent artistically !

*

Taxi-drivers in the city are refusing to come "by the meter." If you ask them the reason why, they merely tell you : "We are at war, don't you know ?"

But, of course, we don't.

*

Will Mr. LAXMAN MAHADEV GAIKAWAD of BORLI, please, get in touch with me as soon as possible ? Thanks.

Friday, 27th November '42

"LATA" sends me a poem about "Who Killed Stafford Cripps ?" I had no idea Stafford Cripps was 'dead',

but "LATA" says so, and maybe she knows better. Anyway, listen to what she has to say :

WHO KILLED STAFFORD CRIPPS ?

Who poisoned Stafford Cripps ?

" I ", said Churchill,

" I made him swallow the Indian pill.

I poisoned Stafford Cripps."

Who drowned Stafford Cripps ?

" I ", said Amery,

" I threw him from the Indian ferry.

I drowned Stafford Cripps."

Who plugged Stafford Cripps ?

" I ", said Wavell, C-in-C.

" I plugged him on the defence plea.

I plugged Stafford Cripps."

Who ship-wrecked Stafford Cripps ?

" I ", said Linlithgow,

" I just refused to row.

I ship-wrecked Stafford Cripps."

Who killed Stafford Cripps ?

" I " said Stafford Cripps,

" I just re-sealed my lips

I killed Stafford Cripps."

—LATA.

*

In a huge half-page "America Fights for Freedom" advertisement appearing in this morning's *Chronicle*, is shown the face of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

with, so it appears to me, a pensive and questioning look and on either side of his face is written boldly just the year, “1776”.

He sort of seems to be asking : “Hi Pardner, aint you got no DATE of your own, too?”

*

When a business-man has ‘crossed the road twice,’ he becomes a double-crosser !

—LATA.

Saturday, 28th November '42

Every now and then, in the lives of each of us, however humble and mundane, happens something, little or big in itself, which pervades and influences our daily conduct, making of us better men, and, of course, better women too —if by ever such a slight degree.

Some such thing happened to me on Wednesday afternoon as I sat seeing, unfolded before me beautifully, the simple and graphic saga of religious tolerance and the Oneness of our Maker—of the identical meaning of *Ram* and *Rahim*, of *Krishna* and *Karim*—an impassioned plea for universal brotherhood because we are the children of one and the same Father, be we Muslims or Hindus—The story of “BHAKTA KABIR” !

The story of that weaver-saint who, hounded and scorned by the ‘representatives’ of the two warring religions, yet continued to plead for UNITY AND TOLERANCE.

Many were the obstacles he encountered and still more the personal risks he took, risks which might have meant the end of him. Stones were thrown at him mercilessly—'they' flung him into fire—'they' threw him into rivers -- and 'they' flung ceaseless and malicious venom at him. But he continued his crusade, for that was life itself for him.

And these 'they' were none other than those self-appointed votaries of their own versions of God, because that seemed to be one of the most paying professions.

Today too, we have self-appointed 'leaders' of this, that and the other sect, who help to bring about NOT a better understanding of the other's point of view—NOT a better appreciation of the other's feelings—NOT a harmonious atmosphere in this little world of ours—BUT a continuous internecine war because but for this enmity there would be no need for these 'leaders'!

I would like these 'leaders' to see "BHAKTA KABIR" and then try to explain to themselves at least—if they do not wish to explain it to their 'followers'!—the DIFFERENCES upon which they keep on harping.

A perfect production all round, good work by everybody, actors directors and technicians. But, of course, all that is over-shadowed by the story each minute of which is a perfect argument for HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY.

Tuesday, 1st December '42

Yesterday something happened which disappointed and depressed me very, very much. But it was only a

personal shake-up and remembering "laugh, clown, laugh!" I shook it off. In the process, however, the imp in me got the better of me and is still persisting.

And so, to-day's "Last Corner" is not really being written by "Little Man" but merely by this imp!

*

Something 'silly' is happening in our blade black market. In fact, everybody is being 'shaved-clean'!

And in our cigarette black market where, in fact, everybody is being 'burnt out'!

And in our soap black market where, in fact, everybody is being 'washed-clean'!

And lastly, in our medicine black market where, in fact, everybody is being 'drugged'!

*

Yesterday morning Churchill occupied the Bombay 'AIR' for considerable time!

While Rommel is struggling for breath, Churchill is asking for more breadth!

*

Whitehall's 'S. O. S.' for India: Amery coming as Viceroy!

*

May be, others too, knew of my disappointment and depression and so as if to cheer me up, here are two lovely sallies which "Last Corner's Addict" has sent:

"The Police made a mild lathi charge" says a news item.

The next of kin have been duly informed!"

"The average married man should sincerely thank the Government because, now in addition to being detained at the office, he can also be detained at the Government Grain Shops!"

*

"You will hardly believe" that "Little Man" has not yet been pulled up under Contempt Charge because, there being too much of contempt, he is beyond the bounds of law!

Wednesday, 2nd December '42

Blade prices up by FIVE HUNDRED PER CENT !
Soap—my brand, *Swadeshi* !—not available except at
THREE HUNDRED PER CENT ! Cigarettes—pipe
down, "Little Man" ! Fever persisting because quinine up
by FIFTEEN HUNDRED PER CENT !

And I am told there is a war OF the people ON. But
I only know OF a war ON the people. Everywhere cor-
ruption, inefficiency, looting, conflict, Conflict, CONFLICT !
And so, now and then, there is a desire for escape from it
all. They say this desire is cowardly, but it is there.
ESCAPE.

*

And *jhim-jhim*, for me the sweetest sound on earth,
beckons—Sadhona Bose—"Meenakshee" (what a peace-
fully musical name!)—tinkling feet—graceful movements

which give meaning and add beauty to life—and above all, *jhim-jhim* !

And so to escape, I saw " Meenakshee ", but Heaven help Madhu Bose if I see him, for here too, conflict, only a different kind of conflict.

The conflict of young love and old obstacles. The conflict of deteriorated humanity, which could countenance the selling and buying of young wives and the sublime manliness manifest in Ahin's (Eye-doctor) restoring sight to his coveted Meenakshee's eyes so that they may once again behold the face they had learnt to adore—Another face !

But, for all that there was for me an escape too, in " Meenakshee ". The music—the background music too,—the smooth story—the unpretentious and quiet acting—the lovely satire on life's various little failings—and of course, the *jhim-jhim*, but of *jhim-jhim* I would have liked more, much more !

But a thousand odd feet pruned off would have made " Meenakshee " slimmer and therefore, still more nourishing !

*

The Chairman of the National VEGETABLE Marketing Committee of Britain has been appointed the Chief Justice for India.

To vegetate !

Thursday, 3rd December '42

The Government of Sind has 'declared war' on the human sharks who profiteer in razor blades, etc

A case of 'shaving' the 'shaver' !

*

And the Government of Bombay, not to be left behind, is going to 'declare war' on these human sharks too, the first 'victims' being the cigarette black dealers.

But these black-dealers have told me in and with confidence that the whole move will just go up in smoke !

*

And then I was told that if you are said to be having an inverted mind, it only means that mentally you are standing on your head !

And if you possess a split personality, it only means that there are, really speaking, two of you, each standing on only one leg !

Saturday, 5th December '42

When March comes, vernal breezes play hide and seek among the few trees of our city and birds begin to whistle their 'tiny lungs out. But next March there is going to be one more addition to this song of spring.

Every morning at the Government House, there will be a concert of solo bag-pipe music played by the then His Excellency the R. Hon. Col. David John Colville who will give "a brilliant rendering of a well-known Scottish air" (quotation from a New Delhi communique) and the

ELITE of the city's SOCIETY will gather to dance the *Highland Fling*! Collections, if any, will be credited to the War Gifts Fund.

*

"You will hardly believe" that Amery, 'S. O. S.' for India, has decided to go on a fast, unto death if need be, for the purification of the soul of his son John who has gone over to Hitler's camp and that a White Paper on this decision will shortly be issued!

*

And then, I am sure, "You will hardly believe" that Atlee has given an ultimatum to Churchill that if a die-hard is appointed as the Viceroy, it would be easier for him to die than remain in the Cabinet with the die-hards!

*

Please don't believe these two—that Sir Roger Lumley will shortly announce that Government servants henceforth needn't be shaved—considering the rise in blade prices!

And that Sir Roger might also absolve all Government servants from the need of washing—considering the rise in soap prices!

Monday, 7th December '42

A telephone call:

"Is that you, 'Little Man'?"

"Yes. Who are you and what can I do for you?"

"This is 'Tiny Timkie', 'Little Man', bringing to you a loadful of grievances from the Black Market.

"A couple of days back, I went along to buy a small bottle of brandy for medicinal purposes. My doctor had asked me to buy a particular brand and had told me it would cost about TWELVE TO FOURTEEN RUPEES.

"Actually, I couldn't get it for a pie less than TWENTY-TWO and that after inquiring at nearly a dozen shops each of which wanted more than the other. And, 'Little Man' in case you don't know, the pre-war price was, so the shop-keepers themselves said, four to five rupees !

"Then I tried to buy a few toilet things. My God, what prices ! A certain brand of soap, manufactured locally, of which the price has been advertised at five annas a cake, couldn't be had at less than eight annas and at that the tone was, 'Take it or go to hell' !

"A certain brand of hair oil, *Swadeshi* manufacture, has suddenly gone up from one rupee six annas a big bottle last month, to anything between three to four rupees !

"But one big shop capped it all. I asked for a particular brand of *Swadeshi* soap. Its fair price last month was one rupee two annas a box of three cakes.

"The salesman, a shifty-eyed one, hesitated and then said, 'We haven't got it and its manufacture has been stopped. But I could get some for you'. When I asked the price, he quoted it at fourteen annas a cake.

"Intrigued by this, I asked for some. He promptly dived into the inner recesses of the shop and brought forth a box WITHIN A COUPLE OF MINUTES. Of course, I didn't take it. Couldn't afford it.

"And of tea—everytime I think of it, I can't help boiling over. Are you listening, 'Little Man' ?"

But I didn't answer. I had heard enough of these sickening details.

*

And then there is the perplexed friend of mine who goes round asking everyone to explain to him in the name of Heaven, how can a 'white' government and a 'black' market exist and function side by side so harmoniously !

Wednesday, 9th December '42

In these days of awfully exacting and nerve-racking life around us, the citizens of our city, residing in and around Old Marine Lines, New Marine Lines (north section) and generally speaking, all those staying nearabouts Metro Cinema, are the recipients of one special 'favour' at the hands of they know not who !

Almost every night a band plays—or, rather bleats !—some kind of music very late into night. On Monday, it was past one o'clock—on Tuesday night nearabouts that—record of previous nightly performances not kept !

And the citizens round-about sit in their balconies or, if they have no balconies, near their windows and gaze at the moon and vainly dream of peace in tune with the loud-mouthed saxophone !

Whether some of them also long for a handy over-size brick to throw on the head of the saxophonist by way of approval, is not known and therefore, can at best be merely a conjecture !

And these citizens, not being of the ungrateful type, realise fully the 'uplifting' value of these concerts. It helps

them not only to get up early the next morning but also to get up full of vigour and a sense of spirituality ! And if a dark thought and a curious desire for an over-sized brick pops up into their minds, they quickly brush it aside, being pre-eminently gentlemen first.

In this connection it might be of interest to know that the police would come in to enforce silence on these disturbers of King's peace, only they are too busy at the moment throwing darts in the new "Come, throw a dart—Come all ye faithful, throw a dart !" shops !

*

Amidst the country-wide jubilation at Linlithgow getting another six months, one little fact is likely to pass unnoticed—that the Stud-Bulls of the country have given up their hunger-strike which they had mutely started, sometime back, as a protest against the imminent going away of their patron Saint !

*

"ALMOST ALL UNMARRIED AMERICAN YOUTHS TO BE MOBILISED", a heading.

Fearing some such move here, too, all bachelors and spinsters are making a bee-line for each other "you will hardly believe" !

Thursday, 10th December, '42

"LATA", the "Last Corner's" rhymist, is not to be left behind in this Linlithgow extension affair—but, perhaps, you had better listen for yourself to what she has to say !

LINLITHGOW IS EXTENDED !

The "wise and patriotic men"
 Are shedding tears of joy
 That Linlithgow is staying on
 As the extended Viceroy !

Fazlul Huq is howling hoarse
 His larynx must be sore ;
 "Our popular Lord Linlithgow
 Gets six months more" !

Sikandar Hyat's mad with delight
 At Linlithgow's extension ;
 For only then, from collective fines
 HIS Muslims will get exemption !

The Stud-Bulls are exultant
 Their broken hearts are mended ;
 Their hunger-strike is over
 Their Linlithgow is extended !

—LATA.

*

'Black' food ! 'Black' cloth ! 'Black' medicines !
 'Black' soap ! 'Black' cigarettes ! 'Black' blades ! 'Black'
 what not ! And a 'White' government !

And in those good old days when I was very very little,
 I used to hear it said that every cloud had a silver lining
 and when I grew up a little more, I used to hear it said
 that there could be no 'shadows' without 'light' !

*

Random bits from this morning's paper :

"His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore endowed
 one lakh of rupees to the (Annamalai) University...."

"The Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters (of the Annamalai University) was conferred on...His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore...."

Friday, 11th December '42

To-day I sat down to write about the tragedy of uncontrolled cloth prices and how very, **VERY GRATEFUL** I am to Govt. of India first and to our beloved self-sacrificing millowners next for deciding to give us *Standard Cloth* at last...and grumblers were beginning to say that God was **NOT** in His heaven and all was **NOT** well with the world!

But I am feeling much too impish for any serious subject, so cloth and its cut-throat prices will have to await a saner mood. In the meantime—

*

"High Court Judge Hauled Up For Contempt Of Court", a heading.

In the language of tiny tots this would be a case of the biter bit and in the language of "'Pipe Down' Shamdasani" it would be a case of....

*

Says "Londoner" that the offer of viceroyalty was made by Churchill to Sir Archibald Sinclair, "in the bleak Moorland country...."

But the offer was not rejected because it was either too bleak or too bleakly made!

*

From a huge half-page “America Fights for Freedom” :

- “Only thirty-five years after America had acquired the Phillipines, the United States Government set up a
- self-governing Commonwealth for the Fillipinos....”

Hi Pardner, why keep rubbing THEM up the wrong way?

*

And lastly proof positive of the Government of Bombay living up to the ‘advanced time’—the NEW manager of the Government Grain Shops is fifty-two, in fact, very much advanced ! (I say, “DoPI”, is my information correct?)

Saturday, 12th December '42

The Government of Bombay is very graciously giving the starving, famine-stricken people of Bijapur District **ONE RUPEE PER HEAD** if they quit the district and don't come back within one month.

A kind of a self-MEASURE of THEIR VERY OWN rule of peace and plenty—*Alleluia!*

*

And then I saw “BHAKTA DAMAJI” where the story begins with a similar scene of famine and starvation and how after an inward struggle, Damaji, the government representative, throws open the Government granary to fill somewhat the hungry mouths of its people.

The story of the miseries of the underdog 'depressed' people very well told—the story of their militant anger---and BHAKTA DAMAJI preaching peace and faith---a story with a moral for to-day when people have learnt to hate, and "show their teeth" to each other at the slightest provocation.

It is a pity that its makers have confined "BHAKTA DAMAJI" to the Marathi language, thereby confining very much the scope of his message of peace. The comparatively short footage of this picture is a welcome relief but I couldn't quite understand the introduction of the *naikini* with her morbidly lewd jokes and mannerisms. May be, it was to set off the austerity of BHAKTA DAMAJI but even so, was it absolutely essential?

I thought this was the only drawback, and it could have been easily avoided, of an otherwise admirable and purposeful picture.

Monday, 14th December, '42

Matunga—the 'home from home' of Bombay's contingent of hard-working and frugal-living, lovers of *dossa* and *idli* from the land of *The Coom* ! Who ask for nothing except a chance to slog away at whatever wage is going and live a life which apart from the *dossa* and *idli*, is bound to be rather a bleak affair.

But still, being of the tenacious type, they'd like a chance to live as long as possible. Our Municipality doesn't seem quite either to appreciate this natural desire, or even to understand it !

Matunga—whose men-folk trudge to the heart of the city everyday to work so that they might have something to live on.

Matunga—whose equally hard-working, but more charming ladies come to the market to buy vegetables—so sweet they look as they search for the cheapest ones and that too, at the cheapest prices !

And WITHIN BARELY TWO YARDS of where the vegetables are sold, lay—I saw it myself, last evening !—a huge big mound of rubbish. Food refuse—garbage—dead crows—dead rats—all this cocktailed up into one big stink-emitting and disease-generating mass.

Matunga—I am told that Municipal Commissioner Bhat (Esq., I. C. S. !) goes round each nook and corner of the city himself. Maybe, he has seen this and may be, he doesn't think there is anything to be alarmed at. Maybe!

Matunga—it too, pays towards the 'keeping' of our Public Health Department. But Matunga prefers to call it the Public Disease Department ! Facts, however, seem to suggest that it should be called the Publicly Diseased Department. But then bare facts are such damnable liars !

Tuesday, 15th December, '42

Raman Vakil has sent me his long poem—"To Europa"—brought out by Padma Publications, easily their second best publication so far.

Now, I am no poet to be able to judge the poetic merits of this piece. Nor am I a college, or even a school teacher of poetry to be able to criticise it. And I do not know whether it is in heroic verse or un-heroic.

But this I do know that the 'deeds' recounted in this charmingly got up little booklet, are definitely not heroic. Matter of fact, they are un-heroic or, if you are a stickler for grammar, you can even use the word "villainous" !

It is the story of the rise and fall of "Europa"—of its lust for power—of its ungodly methods—of its unmanly behaviour—of its thriving on the toil of the 'weaker' races —of its crucifixion of Christ !

Listen to the opening stanza of this thirty page-long well-sustained tale of "Europa's" tragedy and impending doom :

Europa fair ambitious Satan's bride !
Thy days of glory seem to pass away,
Thy lips once coral red have turned quite grey.
Thy golden tresses are now falling fast
And lovesome roses of a youthful May
By ruthless winter parched, now withered lie ;
And utter gloom and sombre darkness rule
Thy present chaos and this spell of doom.

There is heaps more in it, better and better. But towards the end Raman Vakil weakens, at least to my understanding, and implores "Europa" to mend her ways so that our little world might become a place in which Man might yet be able to live with peace, honour and dignity.

Whether "Europa", having tasted world-power and having gulped down world-blood, will mend her ways is still only an academic question. But this much seems to be fairly certain that if Man has to achieve dignity in life, Europa's poisonous fangs will have to be removed.

And whether she will consent to that by reading this little booklet, is very, very doubtful. I doubt if Europa

ever reads such books. I think the only time she will read such a book will be on her Day of Judgment. But maybe, for Europa there will be no Day of Judgment !

The whole long poem is, in short, a graphic tale of—

“ Ah dark misdeeds of men with faces fair

Who claim from God himself their proud descent ! ”

Wednesday, 16th December '42

Yesterday I received two letters which hurt me very much. Not so much because of their reproach but because of the agony of the writers.

One of them, from a clerk on fifty-five rupees a month, asks if I am blind to the “ prevalent cruel prices of cloth ” and if not, why have I not written about it ?

The second, from a Government employee getting hundred and thirty a month, reproaches me bitterly for “ not carrying on an unceasing crusade against profiteering on the one hand and imbecile inaction on the other.”

And here are the figures they give : Food up by 250 to 300 per cent. ; Cloth up by about 300 per cent. ; Charcoal up by about 200 per cent. ; and other miscellaneous items up by about 200 per cent. ;—the cost of ‘ existence ’ (their word because, I suppose, it cannot be called ‘ living ’ !), therefore, up by an average of **OVER TWO HUNDRED PER CENT.**

Argues the government employee, that such being the rise and there being no rise to speak of in the incomes, it could only mean a deterioration by over two hundred per cent. in the standard of ‘ existence ’ (again, their own word).

If during a war for a better order for all people, this should happen due to vicious forces easily controllable BUT UNCONTROLLED, what hopes can we place in the shape of things to come?

Time and again, I have written about these things to the best of my ability. But it is a little tiring to write again and again and see NOTHING DONE. There are times when I am sick with despondency and even my typewriter plays me strange tricks when I write of these things, or, maybe, it is the mist in my eyes!

I was told that our government ridden and over-ridden as it is by the narrow-visioned I. C. S., is merely blind and cannot see beyond its nose which, incidentally, must be awkwardly short. They have developed a formula, "You can't tell me. I KNOW" and the tragedy is that THEY don't know that THEY know nothing!

But still, I promise that I will keep on hammering at THEM and maybe, one day something will be done--I don't know, I can only hope so.

Or, may be, THEY are, even now, muttering away. "Our Father Which art in heaven.....Give us this day our grey matter, Amen"!

Thursday, 17th December '42

To-morrow there will be no *Sentinel*—I don't know why and even if I knew, I wouldn't be able to tell you why. Naturally, there will be no 'Last Corner,' too, and so for me, personally, it is going to be a case of

"It's a holiday to-day
The 'wedding of the painted doll'!"

And so with this unexpected 'holiday' in prospect, the imp in me has gone goo-goo !

*

In a report in yesterday's *Sentinel* the police relate that a sailor relieved a *yellow-pugree* of his lathi and then 'went for him' with it.

What you might call, "paying one back in his own coin," or, if you want still another phrase, you might call it, "the chickens come home to roost" !

*

And then a friend from the 'land of the Hurs' tells me that the *Old Ma of Bori Bunder* is 'in pains' once again and is about to bring forth yet another brat—a 'Chota Hur'—and may be this one is pre-ordained, the cute old thing that she is !

And that, weather-cock premier Ghulam Hussein is going to accord a 'large-sized' welcome to this 'Chota Hur' !

*

From yesterday's *Sentinel* :

President Roosevelt had a head cold....

Or, was it a cold head ?

*

Although Rommel has been running and running very fast, indeed, nobody has timed his speed and so it is not known whether he has beaten, or even equalled, the athletic speed of Alexander which is a mile in 4 minutes and thirty-three seconds !

*

"Muslim League Dictates Terms to Sir Ghulam Hussein Hidayatullah" and orders him to "TAKE ORDERS FROM JINNAH.

The little Fuehrer's first 'bloodless' victory—a 'large-sized' one! And it was beginning to be said that goose-stepping doesn't pay!

Saturday, 19th December '42

From a G. I. P. advertisement :

WITH a view to minimise the use of small coins particularly of quarter anna, it is hereby notified thatIN FARES WHICH AMOUNT TO LESS THAN FOUR ANNAS, fractions of an anna of six pies and less will be reckoned as six pies and fractions of more than six pies will be reckoned as one anna (Caps (mine).

This IS NOT either exploitation or fleecing, or even indirect taxation. And if you were stupid enough to ask railwayman Benthall why less than six pies should not be reckoned as zero and more than six pies but less than an anna as six pies, he will either tell you that "government has no answer to give" or at the very least, that "government wants notice of the question"!

But in the meantime he will assure you that this IS NOT being done because the government wants some 'easy' money easily and that from the poorest people, but merely for the convenience of those very people. He will further convincingly prove to you that whereas less than six pies being reckoned as six pies is convenience for the people,

less than six pies being reckoned as zero will be inconvenience itself, of course, for the people !

*

That the *Iranis* of Bombay will follow Benthall's admirable lead and demand six pies for less than six pies and an anna for less than an anna.

After which the vegetable vendors, not to be left behind, will also announce their solicitious desire to save you the trouble of being burdened with copper coins !

The net result of all this will be that everybody who can, will be getting a little extra by way of *baksheesh* from you for saving you so much trouble. And of course, your gratitude will be simply un-bounded !

And the beggars of Bombay, too, will follow Benthall's lead and demand six pies minimum if you wanted to give them less than six pies and an anna if you wanted to give them less than an anna !

Monday, 21st December '42

Some people have gone out of their way just to write ---and others, who met me, made it a point to tell me --- that on Friday last, on which most of our newspapers went on a one-day 'fast', they DID NOT buy any of the non-fasting papers.

Made me sort of feel that "we are not alone" and believe me it was a mighty fine feeling.

*

Yesterday I undertook, compulsorily, a pilgrimage of our city. I went round the city, here, there and almost

everywhere, covering over ten miles on foot. A pilgrimage just for one single match box.

Every restaurant, every *pan-bidiwalla*, and every other shop where I asked for a match box, had the same story to tell me—We have no match boxes to-day !

And very curious, indeed, were the explanations offered by a variety of people. There was the intelligent *Irani* who told me that a few people, probably *Multanies*, had cornered the whole stock to push up the price. And he added, "Who is afraid of the Government?"

There was the *pan-bidiwalla* who volunteered the information, in strict confidence, that as there were too many fires breaking out these days, the Government had seized the entire stock and was now going to give one match-box at a time, only to bonafide users! "*Nahin bhai, aisa nahin. Subh machies chale gaen.*" (No brother, it is not that. All the match boxes have gone away), said a *gharriwalla* standing close by. And when I asked him where, he replied "*Hamko kiya malum? Sarkar se poocho*" (How should I know? Ask the Government).

And when I made bold to ask a "limb of the law" what, in his opinion, could have happened to the match boxes, he looked me up and down, knitted his eye-brows and finally said very emphatically, "It's a Government secret and I cannot tell you." And so my pilgrimage lasting a good many hours was in vain.

But almost all shopwallas told me in undertones that they'd give ME, as a special favour (I don't know why!) ONE MATCH-BOX on MONDAY. And try as I did, I couldn't find out why Monday? And how did every shop expect stock on Monday? Have the cornerers decided to release their stock, in dribblets from to-day?

Tuesday, 22nd December '42

One Sunday, sometime back, I called on B. G. at his home because I wanted him to explain to me the exact place of the Press in the life of a country. I also asked him about the freedom of the Press and its prerogatives and the ways and means of asserting and preserving these.

As was but natural, the talk turned round the peculiarly unfortunate position of the Press in this unfortunate country of ours. And "over a cup of tea" B. G. told me the story of the Indian Press. When he came to the prerogatives and the freedom of the Press, he told me that there was one absolutely infallible method for asserting these. And that was to black out altogether all Government propaganda unless and until the Government recognized the proper place and function of the Press and treated it with due dignity.

Subsequently at an Editors' Conference, he outlined this plan in an impressive speech which, those who listened to it told me, was one of his finest and that is saying not a mouthful but many mouthfuls.

To-day the Standing Committee of the All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference has found itself compelled to adopt this dignified method. To-day B. G. should be extremely happy. Not because his plan has been accepted, although that in itself is sufficient to make anybody happy, but because the Indian Press has at last stood up to vindicate its rights and freedom.

*

Clad in a three-piece WARM suit with tie, handkerchief, and even socks, to match, spats on his shoes and

a walking stick in his hand, walking warmly in the broiling heat of the Bombay sun—what a pitiful sight !

Heavy in his footsteps, puffy-cheeked, out of breath with the permanent green of alcohol in his eyes—Oof, here comes the "E. R." (England Returned) ! Foul in his language and fouler still in his thoughts and yet fouler still in his deeds is this erstwhile son of the East gone West !

And then I heard Barua tell him a few home-truths in his "JAWAB"—such stingers at that, even calling him a *Nadan* to his face !—typical Barua purposeful satire on the idiotic in our life.

And then Kanan sang a song to put Barua to sleep—a song pleading with the moon to linger yet awhile while she sang of Life. I don't know whether the moon lingered but I do know that that song keeps lingering in my ears !

Thursday, 24th December '42

I have received an agitated letter from a "poor Little Government Servant," which serves to show two things very plainly, too plainly, I think. Firstly, it shows the unbearably drastic result OF the undeclared and unchecked WAR ON the PEOPLE ; and, secondly, it explodes the smug and dangerously complacent self-righteous theory about the 'loyalty' of those in Government Service. Read it, for heaven's sake, READ IT and do something while still there is time.

Dear Little Man,

...I am a very little man in reality as well as in social status being a member of that class which is completely Indianised as great man Benjamin Guy Horni-

man always says, a clerk babu in one of the Government offices in Bombay.

I have read complaints regarding black market in your columns—soaps are gone up, medicines are costly, tea is untouchable, cigarettes and so on. Dear Little Man, I have trained myself to consider all these as luxuries. What else can I do—a clerk in the grade of 50-5|2 with a family of wife, two children, widowed mother and a young sister.

Although I am among those rice eaters of India, my income is hardly enough to get sufficient rice for our sustenance. So, Little Man, I beseech you to solve my problem of existence with all my family members with the above stipends and advise me a way out of it ; because I have tried all the ways except one—beg ! I with other unfortunate brother comrades beseeched only higher authorities for revision of scales, in view of war time but no reply ;—borrow—I am a loanee to the Co-operative Society of our office—the last one, which though in this plight, I abhor.

Yours truly,

"Poor Little Government Servant."

You "Poor Little Government Servant !" The only consolation I can offer you is the thought that there are others, many, Many, MANY PEOPLE who are much worse off than you.

And the only remedy I can suggest to you is that you should take off a few minutes every day to pray, Pray, PRAY with all your soul that THEY might yet see the "kindly light" and guided by it, do something to "overhaul this breaking, quaking, squeaking, rotten machinery !"

Saturday, 26th December ' 42

Since Thursday night there has been much gaiety and much celebration for Christmas—for the birth of Jesus Christ twenty centuries back. Jesus Christ Who was crucified in life because He preached a way of life that was different from that of those who wielded the sword at that time.

Since that Crucifixion more and more people have professedly embraced Christianity of their own accord and many at the point of the sword. Jesus Christ wanted conversion by love and reasoning but some who self-appointed themselves as the carriers of His message, thought otherwise and Christianity assumed a character of force, of compulsion and of subtle methods which forgot all about love and good-neighbourliness and talked only of the mundane in life.

Christianity's cardinal principle of tolerance was forgotten and it became the hand-maid of commerce, of the greed in Man. These carriers of His message forgot that He had laid down His life so that man may yet be cleansed of his sins, and instead of laying down their own lives, too, like He, they asked for protection from big death-dealing guns—dealing death to the unbelieving heathens.

Christianity which allied itself with politics with all its filthy methods and with big business with all its exploitation activities. Christianity which penetrated into vast continents with their millions of men, women and children, and forgot to teach them love and good-neighbourliness but taught them only racial hatred and racial exploitation. Christianity which brought in its wake, for these peaceful millions who had done nobody any harm, first the Bible, then Commerce and finally the Gun with the Union Jack mounted on it—The Unholy Trinity !

But there ARE Christians to-day who have chosen to follow His OWN teachings and they are once again spreading the message of peace and love. Christians like Verrier Elwin, and others like him, who set out to convert others to the so-called Christianity but have themselves got converted to the broader and truer Christianity which knows no theological bounds.

To them, at this season, I humbly send my greetings and with them I, a confirmed 'nobody', pray for peace on earth and goodwill to men for which He laid down His life.

Monday, 28th December '42

Yesterday there appeared, in VERY SMALL type a report of a meeting of doctors to disapprove the Quinine Policy of the Government of Bombay. That report should have appeared not only in bold type but it should have been featured because it talked of the "callous attitude" of our Government, firstly, about Public Health and secondly, in dealing with "the inhuman profiteers in drugs and medical requisites, who were given a free hand to LOOT AND EXPLOIT the suffering public" (caps, mine throughout).

Dr. K. K. Dadachanji spoke or rather hit out. Listen to him :

Malaria killed every year FIFTEEN LAKHS (of INDIANS) and maimed and incapacitated TEN CRORES of OUR PEOPLE, yet neither the central nor the local government had till now adopted an effective quinine and atabrin policy for its treatment, or any sanitary policy for its eradication or prevention.

The local government.....had been in labour and brought forth a MOUSE.....GENEROUSLY

providing TWO OUNCES of quinine for each doctor for the whole month.....(Which means that) each doctor could treat only EIGHT patients in a month.

Government has failed to control the nefarious profiteers in quinine, who charge Rs. 250|- or more per pound of quinine purchased by them at Rs. 18|- per pound. These inhuman profiteers have hoarded 3,000 pounds of quinine.

Then Dr. K. K. Dadachanji went on to DEMAND :

(1) The Bombay Government must freeze and distribute the 3,000 pounds of quinine in the hands of the Bombay profiteers.

(2) To procure from the Government of India adequate supplies of the (its) **HOARDED** quinine.

(3) Fix the price at Rs. 35|- per pound and not at the profiteering price of Rs. 60|-

(4) Control adequately the sale of the drug.

(5) Import available stocks of prepared atebirin, as well as raw material for its local manufacture at the Haffkine Institute, from U. S. A. by **AIR-PLANES SPECIALLY CHARTERED FOR THE PURPOSE.**

Go easy, Dr. Dadachanji, go easy! How could our government freeze the profiteers? Wouldn't that amount to **LOOTING** them? And our government, based as it is, on principles of general goodwill and individual freedom--how could **THIS** government be a party to such a very shocking thing as you suggest?

Writes a doctor-friend : "No quinine to be had—I am told it is Rs. 450/- per lb. I haven't any and hence prescribe it and leave it to the patients to get it, as best they can."

Wednesday, 30th December '42

I have received a letter from somebody who is not exactly a little man in the real sense of the term, but is in the way of becoming one. I welcome him to this rank because it shows me that more and more people are joining our ranks. So that when the time comes for us to refashion this little world of ours "nearer to our heart's desire" we will have all the more people with us.

He writes :

"If a ticket costs 3 as. 3 ps. then the booking clerks demand 3 as. 6 ps. However when I buy two fresh tickets the cost of both together comes to 6 as. 6 ps. which figure does NOT contain any 3 ps. or any multiple of the same. However even when the figure is a "round" one of 6 as. 6 ps. the booking clerks demand 7 as. for two fresh tickets. This is not fair as the recent enhancement has been entirely due to lack of one pice pieces." (Then he goes on to ask the General Manager of the B. B. & C. I. Rly. to let him know whether this demand is authorized by him. And, of course he thanks the General Manager in advance!) And then the same gentleman says another thing :

"Last Saturday, my wife and her sister travelled second-class. They boarded the Ladies II Class Compartment at Mahaluxmi at the close of the races. The Station Master was present near this bogey. Some

Indian gentlemen tried to travel in this Ladies Compartment, and they were bodily removed from this compartment, the Station Master even delaying the train for this. Immediately after these Indian gentlemen were "ejected", some European men got into this compartment, and the Station Master coolly allowed them to do so, with the result that my wife had to squeeze in between unwanted men in the Ladies compartment. I pointed this out to the Station Master but he did not heed me."

I learn, of course, as usual very unreliably, that the General Manager would have answered this gentleman with "Your obedient servant" thrown in, had he not asked the second query. But since he chose to be so foolish, the General Manager just said "Pipe down, you !"

Thursday, 31st December '42

Tomorrow is the New Year's day. So I had intended wishing you all happiness—such happiness as can be had in these times of unscrupulous all-round profiteering on the one hand and sheer imbecile inaction of those unfortunately (for us !) in authority on the other.

And I wanted you all, little men, little women and the real little men too, to make one grand resolution for the coming year and that was. But I have got something more pressing to attend to and I am afraid I'll have to hold over the New Year's resolution till next time.

On Tuesday last, my *Sentinel* carried a letter from "A Very Red Radical", a Britisher, which took me to task and asked "Why All This Kicking At Britain?" "Very Red Radical" took, if I understand him right, strong exception to my talking of the 'Unholy Trinity'—the Bible.

the Gun and the Union Jack. And then he went on to show how Britian wasn't the worst offender by any means. What about Spain? And, for that matter, what about America, he asked, who "with three-quarters of the world's gold buried in the desert of Arizona" still has "in the Southern States in the street cars one compartment for the Whites, one for Blacks, while lynching still goes on the chain gangsshooting of the miners in Heron (Illinois).....tear gas and machine guns....."

But there is no mention in his letter of the American policy towards the Phillipinos.

However, it is none of my business to 'defend' America, for what has SHE to do with me? I only know of Britain with whom very unfortunately we are associated—not associated, I beg your pardon, but of whom we are a mere dependency!—who has taught us to look upon the 'Whites' with our quota of racial hatred—upon Christianity as the 'favoured' religion—upon the Bible as the forerunner of the Gun and the Union Jack.

Britian has "never suppressed the religion of the territory she has occupied", says this "Very Red Radical"! But can you imagine the extent of ludicrousness in the fact that the INDIAN ex-chequer, deriving its revenue from NON-CHRISTIANS mainly, has yet to support a whole heirarchy of Christian Padres, whom she does not want, on salaries that they can't expect anywhere else
 rld or in the next.

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